

# Thesis Statement

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## What is a thesis statement?

Your thesis statement serves as the main argument that drives your paper forward. It shows the emphasis of your argument and indicates its methodology. It focuses your ideas into one or two sentences. It should present the topic of your paper and also make a comment about your position in relation to the topic. Your thesis statement should tell your reader what the paper is about and also help guide your writing and keep your argument focused.

## Why does it matter?

For the writer: The thesis statement is also a good test for the scope of your intent. Writing a thesis statement tests the writer's clarity of thought. Once the writer decides on the paper's main focus, the thesis statement additionally serves as a guide to remind the writer to keep the essay focused and organized

For the reader: The presence of a good thesis statement aids reader understanding. A well-organized essay presents a more persuasive argument. As the thesis statement announces the essay's topic, and then the body of the essay further explains and supports that topic, the thesis statement creates an expectation in the reader's mind about what will follow in the rest of the essay. When the body paragraphs fulfil this reader expectation, the paper feels well organized and the content makes sense.

**The purpose of a thesis statement** depends on what kind of paper you are writing.

Argumentative: An argumentative paper takes a position or makes an assertion or a claim and supports or justifies the position, assertion, or claim with reasons and evidence.

E.g. "Foreign aid to developing countries does not promote economic growth and social development."

Explanatory: An explanatory (expository) paper describes or explains a specific topic. An explanatory thesis statement tells your reader what it is you will explain and what aspects or parts of the topic will be considered.

E.g. "The nursing profession requires academic knowledge, interpersonal skills and psychological expertise at all stages of patient treatment."

Analytical: An analytical paper evaluates an issue or idea in an organized manner, subdividing various aspects or parts. An analytical thesis statement informs the reader of the issue/idea, identifies the aspects that you are evaluating and shows how you will organize your analyses.

E.g. "Distinguishing between various definitions of "fitness" (e.g., individual, absolute, relative), evolutionary geneticists can use fitness to predict changes in the genetic composition of populations through time."

**A thesis statement makes an assertion;** it is not simply a statement or observation.

Fact or observation: Prescription medications are expensive.

Thesis: Prescription medications are expensive as a result of the impact of drug companies. The permission of direct-to-consumer advertising in the U.S. raises the overall price of prescription medications as drug companies pass the expense of advertising on to consumers.

**A thesis statement is specific.** It makes a definite and limited assertion that needs to be explained and supported by further discussion.

Vague: Shakespeare was a great playwright.

Specific: Shakespeare is more concerned with the political aspects of marriage than with romance in *The Taming of the Shrew*, and this is reflected in the economic use of language in the play.

**A thesis is a main idea,** not a title.

Title: Globalization through Technology

Thesis: Recent advances in communication technology have been a driving force of globalization.

**A thesis statement narrows the topic.**

Broad: Alexander the Great was a successful military leader.

Narrow: Alexander the Great's success as a military leader was partially the result of exploitation of the phalanx box formation developed by his father Philip II. The concealment of the number and formation of units made it problematic for strategists and tacticians of opposing armies to anticipate Alexander's movements, enabling him to conquer an expansive empire.

**A thesis statement takes a stance** rather than announcing the topic or subject. It takes a position that might be challenged or tested.

Topic: Light pollution is a major environmental issue.

Thesis: Light based pollution is a costly expenditure of energy that disrupts ground based astronomy and can cause mild medical conditions to those exposed to it. This significant environmental issue could be alleviated by governmental regulation.

### **Tips for drafting a thesis statement**

- Identify a topic and inform yourself about your topic, focusing on one aspect of your topic.
- Begin with a purpose statement that you will later turn into a thesis statement (OR)
- Begin by asking questions and turn the question(s) into an assertion, give reasons why it is true or reasons for your opinion (OR)
- Begin with a list of the ideas that you want to include; consider the ideas and try to group them.
- Remember: Thesis statements are NOT formulas, they do not always have to be one sentence long, or to be introduced in the first paragraph. Some statements will require more explanation. The thesis statement should remain flexible until the paper is actually finished. It is not essential to have a fully formulated thesis statement to start a paper. As you develop an argument and collect and organize evidence, the thesis statement is developed.